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# Art News

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## FROM "TWILIGHT HOURS."

The rushes whisper softly, the sounds of silence wake,  
large flowers like sad remembrance float on the dark green lake.

Were life but like the water, so calm and pure and deep,  
and love like floating flowers that on the surface meet !  
(1890)

THE Art Season of '96-'97 has come to an end.

THE July and August numbers will appear in one issue of 16 pages at the end of July.

SCULPTOR Leon Miecz Zawiejski in his exhibition at Boussoad and Valadon has shown that he is a versatile talent particularly successful in decorative or strictly realistic work.

PAUL DE LONGPRÉ has informed me thrice that he has moved from 104 East 84th Street to 777 West End Avenue. I do not believe he would have wasted the postage, if he had read what I have written about him in the *Daily Tattler* last December.

A DÜRER SOCIETY has been founded in London with the object of reproducing 15-25 of the painter's masterpieces. Every member will receive one print. The membership is limited to 250. Walter Crane, Frampton and Partridge are interested in it.

MR. SANFORD SALTUS, artist and subscriber to the ART NEWS, has informed me that he does not wish his name associated any further with a paper of such a class as ART NEWS, and positively and finally forbids me to send any more copies to him on any pretext whatever.

VICTORIEN SARDOU and Bisson, the farce writer, are said to have been instrumental in making Miss Elizabeth Maubury, a Dramatists' Agent, an officer of the Academy, on account of the immense sums of money which she has realized for them by her business management of the American productions of their plays. What next?

It may be interesting to know what sort of pictures a well-known art dealer like J. D. Gill, in Springfield, can dispose of. Among the fortunate ones were H. P. Smith, J. C. Arter, A. T. Bricher, T. B. Craig, D. F. Hasbrouck, Edward Moran, V. G. Stiepevich, A. F. Tait, R. W. van Boskerck, E. C. Leavitt, J. G. Tyler, Francis C. Jones, Ridgway Knight, etc. I do not envy the Springfield public for their taste.

SAPIENT reader, if you are short in cash and nevertheless aspire to be dressed like a gentleman, make the acquaintance of Mr. P. Chock, Tailor and Art Patron. Mr. Chock will give you Prince Alberts, Bicycle Suits, Top Coats, etc., galore, of the choicest cut and fabrics in exchange for a few paltry pictures, if they should find grace in his eyes. Mr. Chock's taste is peculiar. He likes odd things, such as Messrs. Hamilton and Verbeck are fabricating, and is particularly fond of potboilers. Poor man, how they get the best of

you. That is the reason why Mr. Dearth was dressed so well. And then my friend Dodge, he got an entire outfit for his wedding for a couple of canvases, that I saw him cover with paint in half an hour each (for his fake auction), and a large painted lithograph representing a chumpie lassie at a well. Poor Mr. Chock, what a shock you prepare for the critics should you ever chuck out your collection upon us !

## ON AMERICAN ART.

YES, you are right, American art is a problem, a Gordian knot, and my sword is not sharp enough to sever it. Yet it amuses me to try my skill and pull a little at it.

Why are we in such and such a condition? Simply because we live in a mercenary age in the most mercenary country of the world. As Mr. Crowninshield, who introduced barbarism into interior decoration, cruelly, but sagaciously remarked to me one day: "We are all here, you, I and the others, to make money." Nobody is particularly to blame, all of us are to blame, no matter to what set we belong. And there are many sets. Let us review some of them.

There are the Franco- and Teuto-Americans who have made European art centres their home, and who have scarcely a good word to say about their country. They occasionally come over here to make money by potboiling and afterwards laugh like Chartrain, Madrazo, etc., at America, with their hands in well-filled pockets. "The Americans have no taste, you know. It's all rubbish over there; what is the use of talking. No encouragement, no atmosphere. America is only good for one purpose: to make money." These disloyal sons of Columbia have had, probably, a bad time over here (why shouldn't they, for some of the bad work they have done?) were not recognized for years, went abroad, received mild recognition at once (the Ministers of Fine Arts take care of that) and bask themselves in its sunshine, letting out their spite or recalling personal reminiscences at every occasion. They believe in Whistler's cosmopolitan art theory and do not realize that (unlike Whistler) they might perhaps have become greater artists if they had returned to America.

And then the public! The inconsiderate brutality of the stupid, inconstant, shameless, insatiable, insolent monster called the public—the *panmuffisme contemporain*, as Flaubert once exclaimed in wild despair—does not spare any one of us all those nameless humiliations which are the portion of the struggling artist. Oh, the tragedy of the artist's fate who, to keep his genius from starvation, has to beg for every cent of praise with doglike servility from that public which he despises beyond expression!

Society, with its mild interest in doing the exhibitions, and limited art knowledge of the Prang

order; considers us with contempt—"What is he, an artist? Pooh!"—does not admit us into their inner circles, at least not as their equals (Who are the artists that move successfully in the best society? Story, Munzig, Muller Ury, Stanford White—who else?) and patronizes us either for charity's sake or speculative purposes. The Old Masters and Barbizon factories prove that. The art connoisseurs are not much better. Those who do not merely buy foreign names, are generally so narrow-minded that their interest in native art embraces only one or two American names. Speculation is not love for art. There is also a small class who clamor for National American art, and always fail to recognize it when it shows itself at rare occasions.

The caste of plagiarists (I do not mean the buckeye fraternity) is very numerous and most injurious. Some of them steal shamelessly and openly; others, with more or less hypocrisy. They are parasites and pirates, and should be treated as such. And as their doings have been so often exposed in one way or another, the profession does not trust anybody, and if a young man has done really something serious, they ask, "Where did you get that idea from?" Originality, *i. e.*: martyrdom.

\* Also a few words about the mercenary artists. Allow me to expose their mechanism in a few sentences: "I repaint every picture I can't sell until it pleases the public. Paint in the tree while I make the coffee. I have to finish this picture by 6 o'clock. Now I have to go to the club; it's on business, you know. Good-bye!"

The art dealers who sell everything that is saleable, no matter how bad it is, of course are strictly mercenary, and at times more unscrupulous than they should be. They are nearly without exception ignoramuses on American art, and continually run it down with a disdainful shoulder shrug. "What have we got here? Is there anybody here who could do that?" Thank heaven, no; there is nobody! (except it were Davies.) Only a uniform tariff of \$500 on every imported picture would settle them.

Then there is the clique which has for its motto, "Glory to the French!" The French are the masters. Let us imitate the French. Then we will get there." (May I ask, "Where?") "Boom up the French style of painting, then, your paper will be a success," said Mr. Carroll Beckwith one day to me. The Munich school does not amount to anything. French technique, that is the proper thing. *Gloria in excelsis*. What we need here are good teachers who teach the neophytes to paint Frenchy. Let us have a Society that will pay its teachers well. It is worth while blowing the horn—and Tarantara! Tarantara! Zing Bum! Messrs. Kenyon Cox, Carroll Beckwith and other society artists pass by, seriously nodding to all sides.

The art critics are rather an embarrassing topic for me. They perhaps mean well enough, it's pity that they know so little about art, and still less about the art of writing. Vance Thompson can write, but he doesn't know enough about art. Coffin is timepleasing and Kenyon Cox devoted to cliques. Artists are the most unreliable art critics of all.

And now be on your dignity. The Incommensurables approach. They believe in themselves

implicitly, they affect not to care for the ovation of the public, and actually avoid exhibiting. It lends their pictures a rarity they would otherwise not possess. In other words, it's a business ruse. Th. W. Dewing is one of their spokesmen.

"Look at my pastel sketch over there. Take a good look at it. Is there anybody else who could do it? Every art school in the country should buy one to forward art education. I do not approve of people continually saying 'we have no American art' or 'we are only at the beginning of an art.' American art is second only to that of France. And whenever it is truly artistic it is so by its own merits, for American artists were brought up on Spartan principles, so many obstacles being laid in their way that they have either to do something or die. You say we have about 10 big men here; they have not any more in France. There are, anyhow, only two artists in Europe, Whistler and McMonnies."

(Pardon me, I could mention 200 names each one as big as any of our "Ten.")

Montross, not exactly a connoisseur, but who, with his Tryon, Dewing and Walker instincts, knows a good picture when he sees it, is the officiating highpriest. Much incense is burnt, and many a mysterious phrase is uttered in his little sanctum at 1380 Broadway. "Now you will have a rare treat; prepare yourself. Have you ever seen any pictures of these artists before? They are very scarce. Now take a long look, 15-20 minutes, express your admiration, kneel down, and look crushed! Not many opportunities will offer themselves to see such art again." The Incommensurables consider themselves the greatest living painters. In their own opinion they even surpass the old masters, but they do not say so outright like their brother clan the Tarbellites in Boston, they only hint at it from afar, for their pose is world contempt.

Mr. R. M. Shurtleff once said, "They are like song composers who excel in a simple little melody and never tire of repeating it." This is hardly just. At least I value them higher. But I do not like their attitude. Their art is great enough without such snobbism and farfetched diplomacy. This charlatanism injures their art. It becomes narrow-minded in the eyes of their sincerest admirers, who like good artists, but who like artists that are men a good deal better after all. I personally prefer A. P. Ryder's or Edward Simmons' attitude. Ryder, who, in hermit-like exclusiveness, does not care adorn for anybody and only lives for himself and his art. And Simmons, the diplomatic diner and *perpetuum mobile* conversationalist, a gentleman of wide culture, wit, and artistic resources, who, with a smile, a wink, or a shoulder shrug expresses the essence of his art philosophy. "What does all our work amount to after all, etc., etc., etc."

Simmons amuses me, and I know I amuse him. We do not take ourselves so seriously as the Incommensurables, and yet are after all more serious by taking ourselves less seriously without the pose of, well, Incommensurability.

I hope I haven't been indiscreet. I wish I wasn't publishing this darned paper. Why waste so much time and thought upon other personalities. It's really very foolish. However, I can't help it; it is once in me and has to come out.